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AIR POUCH

Amembassy GUATEMALA — Despatch No. 270

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 47 — November 25, 1960

Action INR-10 RM/R-2 REP-1 ICA-11 ARA-5 CA-5 SY-2 USIA-11 OSD-2 NSA-4 ARMY-35 NAVY-20 AIR-25 CIA-16 OCB-2

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Declassification Date 10-8-75

Negative Per McPhail Office ARA

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POLITICAL

1. Ydígoras Sees Rosy Future, Possibly Mistakenly

In giving out titles to parcels of land in Malacatán on November 23, President Ydígoras stated the outcome of the previous week's rebellion proved the people were with him and traitors in the Army were few. He said the Government was balancing the budget, the country was coming out of the economic crisis brought on by low coffee prices, schools and homes were being built, Central American economic unity was coming along nicely and the future was "smiling." (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Perhaps an optimistic front is indicated. However, not a few politically conscious individuals in the capital suspect that more determined and more capable persons than those who revolted on November 13 may be plotting against the President, perhaps with substantial outside help. In all likelihood, Ydígoras himself is not so sanguine about the future as his words implied. (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. Dust of November 13 Revolt Still Settling

The granting of asylum in Honduras to some 50 Guatemalan rebels was cer

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reported in front page headlines by "Prensa Libre" on November 24. In Guatemala City, three officers had taken asylum in the Salvadoran Embassy and one officer and four civilians were in the Mexican Embassy. Meanwhile, the GOG lifted the "state of siege" on November 22 in all but five of Guatemala's 22 Departments. (The five: Escuintla, Guatemala, El Progreso, Zacapa, Izabal.) (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: These five Departments stretch across Guatemala from the Pacific port of San José to the Atlantic port of Puerto Barrios. They includ coast-to-coast rail and highway facilities and the rebels operated along thi axis (Weeks 46) between Guatemala City and Puerto Barrios. Both Escuintla and Izabal have been fertile terrain for Communist agitation in the past. With respect to the granting of asylum, the GOG had said it would request the extradition of the rebels from Honduras and President Ydígoras, speaking of those who had taken asylum within Guatemala City, said "deserters" were not entitled to asylum. It was unlikely, however, that he would wish to complicate his life further by having the rebels turned over to him (even if it could be arranged) and those in Guatemala City would probably be granted salvoconductos sooner or later. (CONFIDENTIAL)

3. Cabinet Offers Resignation

The entire cabinet submitted its resignation November 21 to permit the President freedom of action to reorganize the Government following last week's revolt. Among conjectures as to possible changes, the most frequent had Col. Enrique Peralta Azurdia taking over the Ministry of Defense from Col. Rubén González Siguí. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: One of the principal grievances of the Army rebels was Defense Minister González Siguí. The Embassy understands the three ministers most likely to retain their present jobs are Unda Murillo (Foreign Relations), López Herrarte (Public Health) and Bendfeldt (Finance). (CONFIDENTIAL)

4. GOG Announces Czech Arms Discovered

The GOG announced on November 24 information supplied by the Puerto Barrios military zone Commander to the effect that 100 rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition of Czech manufacture had been discovered the day before in the port area. The zone commander reported information had been received that the material had been dropped from unidentified planes heard the nights of November 14 and 15. (UNCLASSIFIED)

5. Salvador Junta Appointment (Marina Rodríguez) Protested

Congressman Manuel Orellana Portillo announced he had sent a message to the Junta in El Salvador, in his capacity as President of the Central American Anti-Communist Federation, protesting the naming of Dr. Marina Rodríguez viuda de Quezada as Under Secretary of Education. Orellana said Rodríguez was a

Communist ("number 321"), a former leader of STEG and former "honorary" secretary to President Arbenz. He said, "This appointment makes us uneasy concerning the political orientation of the Salvadoran Junta." (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Cf. San Salvador Weeka 45, International item No. 1. The STEG (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Educación de Guatemala) has been called the "seed-bed of Communism in Guatemala" during the Arévalo and Arbenz administrations. Orellana is not alone in being "uneasy;" President Ydígoras is deeply concerned over reports he is receiving with regard to the trend in El Salvador. (CONFIDENTIAL)

MILITARY

Negative

PSYCHOLOGICAL

6. Blanco "Odyssey" Backfires

Ramón Blanco, manager of "El Imparcial," left for the U.S. after his "odyssey" of Puerto Barrios incensed GOG officials. Blanco was in Barrios on what he called routine business when the revolution broke out November 13. In the waning hours of the revolt, he hid a rebel leader in his hotel room, explaining the man was a father of six and he (Blanco) felt sorry for him. On November 17, "El Imparcial" published Blanco's account of the revolt, which he characterized as a "melodrama." He said the rebel leaders behaved like "gentlemen," and he belittled the role of national police, hacienda guards and the navy. On November 18, the Defense Minister suspended publication of "El Imparcial" for 20 days. The next day the Supreme Court lifted the suspension. "El Imparcial" did not miss an issue, although Friday's appeared a day late. Still under investigation and fearing arrest, Blanco went into hiding. Meanwhile, local news media and the Interamerican Press Association, of which Blanco is vice-president, protested. Friends of Blanco informed the Embassy that President Ydígoras would allow Blanco to leave Guatemala. He flew to the U.S. November 23. (CONFIDENTIAL)

Comment: The suspension of "El Imparcial" caused indignation in some quarters and may rise up to haunt Ydígoras in the future. On the other hand, many responsible people cannot sympathize with Blanco, who acted badly, and there is widespread satisfaction with judicial relief for "El Imparcial" and the Government's abiding by the court decision, in good democratic fashion. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. Radio Chain Lifted

The GOG order imposed November 13 requiring all Guatemalan radio stations

to carry only radio programs of the official government station, TGW, was lifted November 19. (UNCLASSIFIED)

Comment: Radio outlets applied pressure to resume normal operations and the public was on their side because it liked to have a choice of programs. (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

For The Ambassador:

R F Corrigan

Robert Foster Corrigan
Counselor of Embassy

Reviewer:

RFCorrigan RFC

Contributors:

BJRuyle
LCopmann

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